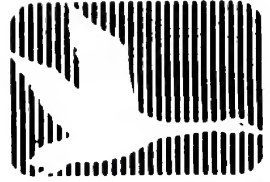


# MARYLAND BIRDLIFE

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# MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY, INC.

Cylburn Mansion, 4915 Greenspring Ave., Baltimore, Maryland 21209

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### Cover:

Northern Wheatear at Hog Island Marsh. Photo by Michael O'Brien, Sept. 12, 1990



## FIRST RECORD OF NORTHERN WHEATEAR (*Oenanthe oenanthe*) IN MARYLAND

MICHAEL O'BRIEN

Late in the afternoon of Wednesday, September 11, 1990, I was walking along the edge of Hog Island Marsh in Caroline County on my way to a marsh bird survey point that I was visiting as a part of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources' Nocturnal Marsh Bird Study. My survey point was located on a narrow sandy dike impounding a small pond and elevated two or three feet above the marsh surface. This provided an excellent view of the adjacent marsh, among the most extensive and beautiful pieces of marsh along the Choptank River. When I arrived at the dike I flushed a small pale brown bird about fifty yards ahead of me. The bird flew a short distance and landed back on the dike. At first I thought it was a Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris*) based on its size, color, and habitat selection, but as soon as I saw it through binoculars I realized it was a Northern Wheatear. I immediately returned to my truck where I had a camera and sketch pad. Upon returning to the dike I relocated the wheatear and studied the bird for the remaining hour of daylight as it foraged on the dike. During that time I made a sketch and took several photographs.

After it became too dark to see I left the site (abandoning my marsh bird surveys for the evening) and drove to the nearest pay phone in Easton. I called the property owner and informed him about the wheatear and asked if it would be possible for other birders to look for it. He graciously allowed me to bring a small number of people to the site as long as I accompanied them. I then phoned Rick Blom who in turn called several birders and arranged for them to meet me the next day. The wheatear remained in the vicinity of the dike through Friday, September 13. Four groups totaling 29 people were able to see the bird on Thursday and Friday. I escorted another group to the site on Saturday but the bird was gone.

Optics used during the observation were Zeiss 10x40 binoculars and various telescopes including a Questar on September 13. Distance from the bird ranged from as close as 15 feet (4.5 m) to about 200 feet (61m). The weather was clear, warm, and calm on September 11 and 12. On September 13 skies were overcast and there was occasional drizzle. On September 14 (by which time the bird had gone) a cold front had passed and it was clear, cool, and breezy.

The following description is based on a composite of field notes and sketches taken on September 11, 13, and 13.

Overall size and shape was similar to a bluebird (*Sialia* sp.), particularly a Mountain Bluebird (*S. currucoides*), though slightly smaller with a proportionately small head, shorter tail, and longer legs. The bill was slimmer than an Eastern Bluebird's (*S. sialis*) and more warbler-like or pipit-like. The bird tended to stand erect and very actively bob its head up and down and wag its tail. It spent most of its time on the ground but sometimes perched in small bushes and, on at least one occasion, perched in a lone dead tree in the middle of the impoundment. It seemed to feed primarily on the ground on insects, perhaps small grasshoppers. At one time, however, it was seen to actively flycatch, flying several feet into the air and tumbling to the ground, much like an American Redstart (*Setophaga ruticilla*). Apparently it was in pursuit of mosquitoes at this time. In many ways the bird's appearance and behavior resembled a fall plumaged western Palm Warbler (*Dendroica palmarum*), brownish above and paler below, with a pale eye stripe, thin bill, wagging tail, and ground dwelling habits.

The bill, eyes, and legs were black. The very base of the lower mandible, the gape, and probably the inside of the mouth were dark, dull pink. The crown, nape, back, and scapulars were medium brown. The nape had a slightly gray cast (rather conspicuous under overcast skies of September 13 but difficult to see under bright sunlight) making it the coolest part of the upperparts. The back and scapulars had a slight cinnamon cast, making them the warmest part of the upperparts. Although it was difficult to judge, the crown seemed to be intermediate, appearing browner than the nape but grayer than the back. There was a conspicuous cream colored supercilium that extended from the forehead to the posterior portion of the ear coverts. The portion in front of the eye and across the forehead was a slightly darker creamy buff. On the left side of the head the supercilium thinned out behind the eye and very faintly curved down behind the ear coverts. On the right side of the head, however, it seemed to broaden slightly behind the eye and terminate abruptly in a rounded manner just short of the end of the ear coverts. This asymmetry may indicate the final stages of a molt. The eye was bordered in front by a rounded dark spot which was about one-half to one-third the size of the eye. There was a narrow pale area between the eye spot and the bill. The post-ocular stripe and the upper portion of the ear coverts were medium to dark gray-brown. The lower portion of the ear coverts, composed of longer, pale cinnamon feathers, formed streaks across the darker upper portion of the ear coverts. The cinnamon-colored lower ear coverts appeared to be the brightest, warmest brown color on the bird. There was a thin, pale arc below the eye, the rear end of which roughly paralleled the cinnamon streaks.

The very upper portion of the chin and a narrow area below the ear coverts were creamy white like the supercilium. The rest of the throat, including a very faint jaw stripe extending up to the juncture of the bill and lore spot, were warm buff. The breast was similar but at times appeared darker, forming a very faint band on the lower breast. The belly, flanks, and undertail coverts were warm buff, similar to the throat, though at times they appeared slightly paler. The vent and a very narrow strip up the center of the belly to the lower breast were cream-white, similar in color to the chin and supercilium. There were three or four very small dark spots, as least one appearing to be a narrow bar, on the breast. These may have been retained juvenal feathers. The fresh basic plumage feathers on the underparts had both buff and white components which, during extremely close observations, created a very faint barred or spotted effect particularly at the sides of the breast and sides of the belly. At the extreme sides of the breast there was a tuft of white feathers sometimes visible where the breast met the wing.

The leading edge of the folded wing was also white. The median coverts were small and rounded with dark centers and broad buff fringes. The greater coverts also had dark centers and broad buff fringes (which all but concealed the dark centers). The tips of the innermost (rearmost) one or two greater coverts were considerably paler than the rest, forming a usually conspicuous pale rear section to an otherwise very indistinct wing bar. All tertials had blackish centers and broad buff fringes. The secondaries were probably similarly patterned but the dark centers were largely concealed, forming a rich buff panel on the wing (only the buff fringe visible). The outermost (lowermost) secondary either drooped below the others at the tip or had a

narrower buff fringe at the tip revealing a blackish center. The primary coverts had narrow pale fringes and blackish centers. The primaries were rather long, reaching at least half way down the tail. They were blackish with very narrow but sharply defined whitish edges. The whitish tips were broader and much more conspicuous.

The tail was more or less square ended. All feathers had narrow but conspicuous whitish tips. The central feathers were otherwise ink black. The remaining feathers were ink black on the distal half and white on the basal half, forming a bold inverted "T" on the tail which was generally visible only in flight. The rump was white. The border between the white rump and brown back was sharp and was at the same level as the dark base/light tip border of the second (middle) tertial on the folded wing. In flight, when backlit, all the primaries and secondaries appeared translucent except for a faint dark subterminal spot on each feather. The flight was bluebird-like although perhaps a bit quicker. No vocalizations were heard.

## DISCUSSION

The most similar species, Isabelline Wheatear (*Oenanthe isabellina*) of North Africa and the Middle East, can be eliminated from consideration for a variety of reasons. According to Clement (1987), Isabelline shows paler wings that lack contrastingly dark-centered coverts (a feature noted on the Hog Island bird) and a smaller white rump patch than Northern. In that paper, illustrations by Alan Harris show the upper edge of the white rump patch to be even with the tip of the third tertial on Isabelline but meeting the middle of the second tertial on Northern (the same pattern described above on the Hog Island bird). This feature is not specifically noted in the text, however. Jonsson (1992) notes that on Isabelline the tail band would be dark brown, not black (as noted on the Hog Island bird) and the ear coverts would be paler and less rufous than on Northern (ear coverts noted as the warmest brown part of the Hog Island bird). Lewington *et al.* (1991) note that Isabelline would typically have a faint supercilium that is whiter in front of the eye than behind it, whereas Northern would normally show a bolder supercilium that is white behind the eye (the latter pattern noted on the Hog Island bird). Further differences from Northern include a broader tail band, a thicker bill, bulkier proportions, and paler, buffer overall coloration (Clement 1987). All other wheatears have either a very different tail pattern, a very different overall plumage pattern, or both (Clement 1987).

Age and sex determination of female-type Northern Wheatears may not be possible with certainty in the field (Clement 1987). However, the fact that on the Hog Island bird the gape and base of the lower mandible were pinkish and that there were a few dark marks on the breast may be enough to indicate a hatching year bird that has all but completed its molt into first basic plumage. An adult male can be ruled out by the lack of black lores and by the slightly off-black color of the wing feather centers (black in adult male) (Clement 1987).

Racial determination may not be possible in the field either, but the overall warm coloration, long legs, upright stance, and habit of occasionally perching on bushes, and (at least once) on trees suggest *O. o. leucorhoa*, the "Greenland Wheatear" (Clement 1987).

The sighting was accepted by the Maryland and District of Columbia Bird Records Committee as the first occurrence of Northern Wheatear in Maryland.

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Jonsson, L. 1992. *Birds of Europe with North Africa and the Middle East*. A & C Black, Ltd., London.

Lewington, I., P. Alstrom and P. Colston. 1991. *A Field Guide to the Rare Birds of Britain and Europe*. Domino Books, Ltd., Jersey.

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# FIRST RECORD OF BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE IN BALTIMORE COUNTY

EIRIK BLOM AND ROBERT RINGLER

On Saturday, October 23, 1983 both authors drove to Millers Island Road to announce to anyone who had showed up that the weekly trip to Hart-Miller Island dredge spoil impoundment was cancelled. The wind was out of the southwest at 10 to 20 mph, and it was raining moderately hard. This was no day to be out on a boat, or to be walking eight miles around the treeless impoundment.

While we were sitting in the parking lot, talking about the trip the following week, a birdwatcher did show up. Had it been one of the regular participants we would have told them the trip was off and gone home. The birdwatcher turned out to be from upper New York State however, and had driven all the way to Baltimore after hearing that the week before we had seen and photographed an Eared Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*) at Hart-Miller. Eared Grebe would be life bird for him.

We felt that, despite the prospect of an uncomfortable day, such dedication should be rewarded, so we rented a boat and headed for the impoundment. The New Yorker was well aware that he was likely to end up wet, cold, and without an Eared Grebe, but he viewed the trip as an adventure, and was looking forward to it.

For the first hour or so the rain was fairly light, and at 9:00 a.m. we were approaching the center dike that divides the north and south cells of the impoundment. It was in the corner of the north impoundment, close to the center dike, that the Eared Grebe had been seen. We were 50 to 70 yards from the intersection when Blom called attention to a small gull flying south along the dike. All three observers watched the bird as it flew past, and disappeared to the south. Despite the comfort levels, the viewing conditions were not bad. We concluded almost immediately that the bird was an immature Black-legged Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*), although the New Yorker acknowledged that he had never seen one before and could not identify it.

The bird was in view for only a minute or so, but we both noted the size, striking wing pattern, and black half collar. The conditions precluded taking notes on the spot,



but we discussed the field marks before proceeding after the grebe. Regrettably it was gone, and we continued around the impoundment. As the morning wore on the wind and the rain increased, and for all practical purposes we did little or no birdwatching the rest of the day.

As soon as we had returned to shore we retired to a local sub shop to dry out, warm up, and write down our observations. The following notes (in part) were submitted to and accepted by the Maryland Ornithological Society Records Committee.

Blom: First impression was of a Ring-billed Gull by size. The first thing that was obvious was the dark M pattern across the back, formed by dark outer primaries and a connecting dark bar from the wrist on the leading edge of the wing almost to the joint of the body and the trailing edge of the wing. The rest of the wing was clean and pale (gray or white), palest on the trailing edge. There was no dark on the trailing edge of the wing. The head was white with a dark spot behind the eye and a black half-collar on the neck. The collar was thin. The tail was white, appeared square, with a distinct dark terminal band. The body appeared all white. Eye, leg, and bill color were not seen.

Ringler: When first seen the bird was on our left, and we followed it as it flew past us at eye level and disappeared to our right. It appeared to be about the size and shape of a Laughing Gull, although no other birds were in the air for comparison. The flight was much like that of a Laughing Gull, rather lazy and not hurried, but direct. The body was white. The upper wing caught my attention, and I failed to observe the head closely, although it seemed to be mostly white with a dark spot behind the eye. The back was gray. The outer primaries were entirely black; the inner ones white. A black band extended from the base of the outer primaries to a point on the middle of the wing near the body. This band was fringed with black spots. The portion of the wing forward of the band was gray like the back; the area to the rear of the band was white. The overall effect was of a large letter M across the mantle. The tail was squared and white except for a black band at the tip. The underside of the wing was white.

This is the third report of Black-legged Kittiwake from Chesapeake Bay, and the first supported by documentation. Kittiwakes are regular winter visitors to Maryland waters well offshore in the Atlantic Ocean, and are rarely seen from land. Although the conditions, strong winds with an easterly component and rain, were ideal for finding oceanic strays in Chesapeake Bay, this bird would not have been seen had not our companion from New York showed up. We certainly hope he eventually found an Eared Grebe.

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## AN INSTANCE OF HOUSE SPARROW AGGRESSION

HAVEN KOLB

Among the outstanding characteristics of House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) is their aggressiveness. Bent (Life Histories of North American Blackbirds, Orioles,

Tanagers and Allies. Washington, 1958) begins his account of House Sparrow behavior: "The English Sparrow is a noisy, boisterous, and aggressive bully in its relation with other species." He then proceeds to point out that its victims are not only box-dwellers and hole-nesters but sometimes open-nesting birds also.

At Beckleysville in northwestern Baltimore County, Maryland, a small colony of House Sparrows lives around a former crossroads general store. Although my home is only about 250 m from the crossroads, I have seen House Sparrows on my 6.5 acres perhaps a dozen times in twenty-five years and almost always in winter around my grain-baited banding traps. I was, therefore, rather surprised by the occurrence here described.

About 2.5 m above the ground in a columnar buckthorn (*Rhamnus*) I discovered a Chipping Sparrow (*Spizella passerina*) nest on July 4, 1988. It was only about 3 m from a window, so it was easily observed. At the time of discovery an adult was sitting on the nest. On July 7 an adult was feeding young that were at least a few days old. On July 8 at 9:50 (standard time) I observed a male House Sparrow at the nest, the first time I had ever seen a bird of that species on my property in the summer. By 9:55 the male was joined by a female. Both birds peered into the nest and once or twice got into it. I did not note the contents. About 9:58 a chippy arrived and perched about 1 m away. During the next several minutes the chippy several times attacked the male House Sparrow but was easily driven away each time. Between attacks the House Sparrow broke small dead twigs from the lower part of the bush and carried them to the nest. At 10:03 the male House Sparrow approached the chippy, fluttered its wings several times while facing it, and then suddenly attacked, knocking the chippy to the ground. Following this the male continued getting twigs, but the female departed. A few minutes later I noted a chippy on the ground several meters away, apparently foraging but I do not know whether it was the same bird. At 10:15 the male House Sparrow was still in the bush, chirping but no longer gathering twigs. At 10:30 all birds were gone and I found the nest empty. But at 10:40 the male House Sparrow was back, gathering grass and small twigs (now from the ground) and taking them to the nest. A chippy was hopping about on the ground nearby. At 10:48 the House Sparrow left. About 10:50 the chippy came to the nest several times but did not get into it. Twice during the hour of observation a chippy carried food but I did not see it deliver it anywhere. During the afternoon I saw both House Sparrows and two chippies in the vicinity of the buckthorn bush but not at the nest.

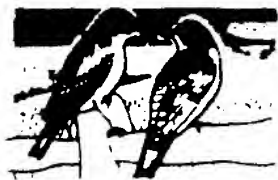
On the following day the pair of House Sparrows was in the vicinity, but not at the nest. Two chippies were also present and also not at the nest. However, several times the chippies fed a young bird that was on the ground within 2 m of the buckthorn. It had open eyes but could not fly. I had not seen it the day before. I did not see it after this day, nor did the House Sparrows appear again.

This incident raises a number of questions, for none of which is there a clear answer. What brought House Sparrows here in summer for the first observed time in 25 years? Had the crossroads colony become too large for available nest sites? If so, why did the House Sparrows not persist in nest-building after evicting the chippies? Was there more than one chippy nestling? If so, was there House Sparrow predation on the nestlings?

18925 Gunpowder Road, Millers, Maryland 21107



# THE SEASON



## BREEDING SEASON, JUNE 1-JULY 31, 1991

DANIEL R. SOUTHWORTH AND LINDA SOUTHWORTH

The breeding season was rather hot and dry with the average temperature slightly higher and average precipitation levels slightly lower than normal for both June and July. With May hot and dry as well, combined with the preceding abnormally mild winter, some birds began nesting early.

**ABBREVIATIONS:** DC—District of Columbia, NWR—National Wildlife Refuge, PRNAS—Patuxent River Naval Air Station, SP—State Park, WMA—Wildlife Management Area.

**LOCATIONS** (with counties in parentheses): Assateague Island (Worcester), Black Hill Park (Montgomery), Bloodsworth Island (Dorchester), Breton Point (St. Mary's), Damsite (Kent), Dan's Rock (Allegany), Deep Creek Lake (Garrett), Hart-Miller Island (Baltimore), Hooper Island (Dorchester), Kent Narrows (Queen Anne's), Liberty Reservoir (both Baltimore and Carroll unless noted otherwise), Loch Raven Reservoir (Baltimore), Piney Run Park (Carroll), Remington Farms (Kent), Sandy Point SP (Anne Arundel), Swallow Falls SP (Garrett), Triadelphia Reservoir (Howard unless otherwise noted), Violette's Lock (Montgomery), Wilde Lake (Howard), Wye Island WMA (Queen Anne's).

**OBSERVERS:** George and Henry Armistead, Polly Batchelder, John Bjerke, Larry Bonham, Dave Brinker, Carol and Don Broderick, Martha Chestem, Dave Czaplak, Lynn Davidson, Bob Dixon, Jeff Effinger, Ethel Engle (reporting for Caroline County), Jane Farrell, Roberta Fletcher, Greg Gough, Jim and Patricia Gruber, Robert Hilton, Marshall Iliff, Kye Jenkins, George Jett, Ellen Lawler, Doug Lister, Nancy Magnusson, Stauffer Miller, Carolyn Mills, Mariana Nuttle, Michael and Paul O'Brien, Beth Olsen, Peter Osenton, Bonnie Ott, Jim Paulus, Elizabeth Pitney (reporting for Wicomico Bird Club), Kyle Rambo, Jan Reese, Sue Ricciardi, Bob Ringler, Kathy Russell, Wilbur Rittenhouse, Gene Scarpulla, L.T. Short, Connie Skipper, Steve Simon, Teresa Simons, Jo Solem (reporting for Howard County), Jim Stasz, Charles Swift, Mary Ann Todd, Mary Twigg, David Walbeck, Robert Warfield, Hal Wierenga, Jim Wilkinson.

*Loons, Grebes, Storm-Petrels, Gannets.* Late migrant **Common Loons** were 6 at Ocean City on June 6 (M. O'Brien, Wierenga) and 1 there on June 20 (M. O'Brien, Brinker, Wierenga). Other reports were 1 on Westminster Reservoir on June 1 and June 30 (Ringler), 1 at North Branch on June 22 (Simons), and 1 in breeding plumage at Kent Narrows on July 9 (Reese). A **Pied-billed Grebe** was noted at Wye Island WMA on June 11 (Walbeck+). Bill Rogers reported 3 **Wilson's Storm-Petrels** at the mouth of the Potomac on July 15, and single Wilson's were noted at Ocean City on June 18 (M. O'Brien) and in the Bay near Smith Island on July 23 (Osenton). An injured **Northern Gannet** was found at PRNAS on June 1 (Rambo, Lister); a sick bird was found at Assateague and 2 other gannets at Ocean City on June 4 (M. O'Brien, Wierenga).

*Pelicans, Cormorants.* M. O'Brien and Wierenga reported 45 **Brown Pelicans** at Ocean City on July 16. Also in Ocean City throughout the season were 10-25 **Double-crested Cormorants** (M. O'Brien). Many other cormorants were spotted during the season with 2 immatures reported at Blockhouse Point, Montgomery County, on June 1 (Hilton), 2 breeding plumage adults and 8 immatures at DC on June 1 and 3 the same day at Seneca (Czaplak), 1 at Triadelphia on June 2 (Gerald Elgert), 2 at Deep Creek Lake on June 8 (Czaplak), 10 at Sandy Point SP on June 14 (P.O'Brien), over 100 at Bloodsworth Island on June 15 (Armisteads), 2 at Violette's Lock on June 25 (P.O'Brien), 2 at Tanyard on July 2 (Engle), 2 at Kent Narrows on July 9 and 8 at Breton Point on July 11 (Reese), 9 at DC on July 14 (Czaplak), and 32 counted at Hart-Miller on July 14 (Dixon+).

*Hérons, Egrets, Ibis.* Inland **Great Blue Herons** were 1 on a pond at North Hill Road, Garrett County, on June 13 (Skipper), 1 at Taneytown on June 29 (Reese), 14 at Loch Raven on July 6 (Simon), and 1 at Cumberland on July 26 (Twigg). The Armisteads counted 111 Great Blue Heron nests at Bloodsworth Island on June 15, and Reese reported 80 birds at Breton Point on July 11; the Grubers reported 38 at Turner Creek, Kent County on July 20, and Czaplak noted 40 in DC on July 28. The Armisteads found a **Great Egret** nest on Bloodsworth Island on June 15. Other Great Egret reports included 9 birds at the north end of Liberty Reservoir on July 9 (Ringler), 17 at Centennial on July 10 (Chestem), 30 at Breton Point on July 11 (Reese), 1 at Black Hill Park on July 23 (Todd), 2 at Piney Run on July 25 (Ringler), and 8 at Loch Raven on July 28 (Jenkins). Wandering **Snowy Egrets** were 1 in DC on July 14 (Czaplak), 1 at Violette's Lock on July 18 (Bonham), and 3 at Hart-Miller on July 21 (Dixon+). The Grubers spotted an immature **Little Blue Heron** at Remington on July 21 and 22 **Cattle Egrets** at Queen Anne on June 7. Other Cattle Egrets reported were 1 at Louisville, an unusual location for mid-summer, on June 14 (Ringler), 2 at Tanyard on June 21 (Engle), 3 at Taneytown on June 29 and 2 at Breton Point on July 11 (Reese), 34 at Bellevue on July 28 (H. Armistead), and 24 at Ruthsburg on July 31 (Grubers). Jenkins noted 19 **Green-backed Herons** at Loch Raven on July 28, and **Black-crowned Night-Herons** reported included 2 at Lake Roland, Baltimore County on July 4 (Walbeck+), 15 fledglings at the National Zoo in DC on July 7 (Czaplak), 1 at Wilde Lake on July 16 (Chestem), 1 adult at Rockville on July 17-18 and 1 adult at the Shady Grove Metro Station on July 20 (Hilton), 3 at Worton Creek, Kent County on July 21 (Grubers), 1 adult at Triadelphia on July 28 (Farrell, Solem), and 1 at Nicolai Pond near Kerger Road, Howard County on July 31 (John Ott). Miller reported an adult **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** in Adamstown on July 19, and 38 **Glossy Ibis** were seen on Elliott Island on June 13 (Armisteads, Mills) and a single at Wittman on July 29 (Reese).

*Swans and Geese.* An adult **Tundra Swan** was seen at Easton on July 8 (M. O'Brien, Gough) and the Armisteads reported 2 adult **Mute Swans** with 6 downy young on Spring Island, Dorchester County on June 15 and 2 birds on Bloodsworth Island the same day. A **Brant** was at Chincoteague Bay on June 20 (M. O'Brien, Brinker, Wierenga). **Canada Geese** reports included 17 adults with 27 goslings at Lilypons on June 5 (Warfield), 2 adults with 5 chicks at Herrington Manor SP, Garrett County on June 8 (Czaplak), about 50 on June 26 at Joppatowne (Swift), 62 at Loch Raven on July 12 (Simon), 70 in DC on July 14 (Czaplak), 250 seen flying over Kings Creek, Easton, on July 27 (Reese), 70 near Laytonsville on July 27 (Hilton), and 65 at the Easton sewage lagoons on July 29.

*Ducks.* Effinger counted over 100 **Wood Ducks**, mostly young, at the Easton sewage lagoons on June 30. Other Wood Ducks of note were 6 hatched in a chimney in Denton, reported on July 1 (Bob Fletcher). The **Green-winged Teal** noted at Hart-Miller on June 2 (Dixon+) was certainly an unusual sighting, and Effinger found 6 early migrants at Easton on July 11. Paulus counted 22 adult **American Black Ducks** at North Branch on June 4, and Czaplak reported 7 in DC on July 14. The high count for **Mallards** was 1100 at Hart-Miller on June 15 (Dixon+), and Rambo flushed a hen from a nest with 5 eggs on Bloodsworth Island on June 17. Czaplak counted 290 Mallards at the DC hydrilla on July 14. Effinger noted single **Northern Pintails** at Easton on June 4 and again on July 11. **Blue-winged Teal** reports were of 7 at Hart-Miller on June 2 and 1 on the 15th (Dixon+), 5 at Easton on June 7 (Effinger, Russell, Olsen), a hen on a nest with 7 eggs on Bloodsworth Island on June 17 (Rambo), 11 at Easton on July 11 (Effinger), 2 at North Branch on July 26 (Twigg, Simons), and 25 at Easton on July 29 (Effinger). A **Northern Shoveler** was in Easton on June 4 and 7 (Effinger) and an **American Wigeon** was at Hart-Miller on June 15 (Dixon+). A **Ring-necked Duck** remained at Easton from May through at least July 10 (M. O'Brien+), and a **Greater Scaup** was at Violette's Lock on June 1 (Hilton). **Lesser Scaup** reports were of 2 at Sparrows Point on June 10 (Wilkinson), 1 near La Plata on June 29 (Jett), 1 at Chestertown on July 2 (Grubers), and 1 at Hart-Miller on July 14 (Dixon+). Michael O'Brien and Wierenga spotted 2 immature male **King Eiders** at Ocean City on June 5-6 and 1 immature male there into August (M. O'Brien, Brinker, Wierenga). Marshall Iliff reported an **Oldsquaw** at Kent Narrows on June 8. An adult male **Surf Scoter** was in Ocean City on June 6 (M. O'Brien, Wierenga) and 8 were at Assateague on June 19 (M. O'Brien, Brinker, Wierenga). Gail MacKiernan reported a drake **White-winged Scoter** at Sandy Point SP on June 23, and Peggy Bohanan noted a **Bufflehead** on Druid Lake, Baltimore City on June 1. Single **Hooded Mergansers** were at Violette's Lock on June 1 (Hilton) and at Hughes Hollow, also in Montgomery County, on June 14 (Czaplak). Stauffer Miller reported a male **Common Merganser** on the Potomac in Frederick County on July 25. Hilton found a male **Red-breasted Merganser** near the Shady Grove Metro Station on June 29, and Reese noted a Red-breasted at Wittman on July 29. The Hart-Miller survey notched a **Ruddy Duck** on June 9 and 15 (Dixon+), a male and a female were at Easton on June 25 and July 8 (M. O'Brien), and a single Ruddy was at Chestertown on July 2 (Grubers).

*Diurnal Raptors.* A **Black Vulture** was seen at Oldtown on June 15 (Paulus) and 1 was reported from Wills Mountain, also in Allegany County, on July 10 (Twigg, Paulus). The **Osprey** seen by Ringler flying up the Patapsco River near Hoods Mill on June 2 was probably a late wanderer. Dave Czaplak reported 2 large young Ospreys in a nest in DC on July 14 for the first successful DC breeding record. An adult male was seen carrying nesting material at Dan's Rock on June 2 (M. O'Brien). Other Osprey reports were 1 at Centennial on June 9 and 12 and 1 at Triadelphia on June 15 (Farrell), 1 on a ground nest with 3 young at Bloodsworth Island on June 17 (Rambo), 1 building a nest at Triadelphia on July 6 and again on July 20 (Chestem, Farrell), and 1 at Loch Raven on July 12 (Simon). Inland **Bald Eagle** reports were of an immature flying near Hagerstown on June 8 (O'Briens), an immature at Dan's Rock on June 15 (Twigg), an adult near Ellicott City on June 15 (Ott), an adult at Triadelphia on July 13 (Magnusson), an adult at Violette's Lock on July 19 (M. O'Brien), another at Triadelphia on July 20 (Farrell), and an immature at the Potomac River in Frederick County on July 31 (Miller). The Grubers reported a female **Northern Harrier** at Chestertown on June 15, another at Sassafras on June 19,

a male at Tuckahoe SP, Caroline County on July 8, a female there on July 9, and another female at Routes 481 and 369 on July 17. Single **Sharp-shinned Hawks** were seen east of Brandywine on June 6 (Reese), at Oldtown on June 10 and July 18 (Paulus), and in Denton on July 26 (Short). **Cooper's Hawks** reported were 1 soaring over Morgan Station, Carroll County on June 2 (Ringler), 1 seen at Little Bennett Park, Montgomery County on June 10 (MacKiernan), 1 at Chestertown on June 12 (Grubers), 1 at Triadelphia on July 6 (Farrell), and 1 at Dentsville on July 11 (Reese). An immature **Broad-winged Hawk** was sitting on a utility pole in Cecil County between North East and Elk Neck on July 8 (Reese). Czaplak reported a fledgling **Red-tailed Hawk** at Lilypons on July 13, and H. Armistead noted 2 **American Kestrels** in Cambridge on June 12. Other kestrels reported were a family of 2 adults and 6 juveniles near Laytonsville on June 12 (Hilton), 3 fledglings in DC on July 7 (Czaplak) and 3 near Blackwater NWR, Dorchester County on July 18 (Lawler). Marshall Iliff reported 2 **Peregrine Falcons** at RFK Stadium in DC on June 15.

*Pheasants, Grouse, Turkeys, Rails.* C. Ellwanger found a **Ring-necked Pheasant** nest in a field in Greensboro on July 1, and a female pheasant was seen near Wye Mills on July 8 (M. O'Brien, Gough). Czaplak reported an adult **Ruffed Grouse** with chicks at the Maryland part of Cranesville Swamp on June 8. An adult tom **Wild Turkey** was at the Sassafras River near Cecilton on June 6 (Ricciardi), and another turkey was seen at Liberty Reservoir, Baltimore County, on June 17 (Scarpulla). **Black Rail** surveys on the lower Eastern Shore produced 146 birds at 76 locations with the maximum concentrations along Elliott Island Road where 42 birds were heard at 12 stops (M. O'Brien, Wierenga), and Effinger reported 1 Black Rail at Easton on July 10. Also found during lower Eastern Shore rail surveys were 47 **King Rails** at 17 points with about 23 of these birds found at 4 stops along the Choptank River (M. O'Brien, Wierenga). Marsh bird surveys also yielded about 19 **Soras** at 6 points along the lower Eastern Shore (M. O'Brien, Wierenga). Michael O'Brien spotted an **American Coot** at Deal Island WMA on June 17, and Czaplak found one adult coot in DC on July 14.

*Plovers, Stilts.* There were 290 **Black-bellied Plovers** at Assateague on June 19 (M. O'Brien, Brinker, Wierenga) and 1 at Easton on July 29 (Effinger). A late spring migrant **Semipalmated Plover** was at Cambridge on June 12 (M. O'Brien), another was at Easton on July 10 (Effinger), and the high count was 128 at Hart-Miller on July 28 (Dixon+). **Killdeer** reports included 50 at Cambridge on June 12 (M. O'Brien), 30 at Easton on June 25 (M. O'Brien), 33 at North Branch on June 26 (Twigg), 45 at Loch Raven on July 17 (Simon), and 42 at Hart-Miller on July 28 (Dixon+). Hart-Miller posted 2 **Black-necked Stilts** on June 2 (Dixon+) and 5 stilts were at Deal Island WMA on June 17 (M. O'Brien) and 7-10 there on July 20 (Walbeck, Gwen Burkhardt).

*Tringine Sandpipers.* Engle found a **Greater Yellowlegs** at Tanyard on June 1, 1 was at Chestertown on June 7 (Grubers), and the last spring migrants were 5 at Hart-Miller on June 9 (Dixon+). The Greaters found near Laytonsville on June 29 (Hilton) and in Worcester County on July 1 (M. O'Brien) were probably early fall migrants. **Lesser Yellowlegs** reported were 5 at Easton on June 7 (Effinger, Russell, Olsen), 3 at Fairmount WMA, Somerset County on June 24, 3 at Easton on June 25, and 53 at Cambridge on July 12 (M. O'Brien), 1200 at Hart-Miller on July 14 (Dixon+), and 34 at Easton on July 29 (Effinger). Early fall migrant **Solitary Sandpipers** were 1 at Sandy

Point SP on July 8 (M. O'Brien, Gough), 3 at Liberty Reservoir on July 9 (Ringler), and 21 at Loch Raven on July 23 (Jenkins). Iliff noted 2 **Willetts** on a nest on June 8 at Kent Narrows, where they were seen with at least one young on July 9 (Reese); 1 was at Hart-Miller on June 15 (Dixon+), 426 were counted at Assateague on June 19 (M. O'Brien, Brinker, Wierenga), and some migrating Willets were seen in Ocean City on June 27 (Warfield). Willets identified as the western subspecies began with 1 at Ocean City on June 18 and 4 at Assateague on June 19 (M. O'Brien, Brinker, Wierenga); 1 or 2 were seen at both locations through the remainder of the season. A **Spotted Sandpiper** was seen at Easton on June 7 (Effinger, Russell, Olsen), 1 at Loch Raven on June 14 (Simon), 1 at Rock Lodge Road, Garrett County on June 20 (Skipper), 2 at North Branch on June 22 (Simons), 2 at Triadelphia on July 6 (Chestem), 11 at Remington on July 15 (Grubers), and 27, including 1 downy young, at Hart-Miller on July 21 (Dixon+).

*Upland Sandpipers, Whimbrels, Turnstones.* **Upland Sandpipers** reported were 1 near Oakland on June 8 (Czaplak), 1 near Pocomoke City on June 24 (M. O'Brien), 2 at Queen Anne on June 30 (Rittenhouse), 5 near Lilypons on June 4 (Miller), and a juvenile there on July 11 (Gough, Czaplak), and 2 at Ridgely on July 29 (Short). A **Whimbrel** was at Assateague on June 19 and 9 were there on July 17 (M. O'Brien, Brinker, Wierenga), and 1 was in Ocean City on July 16 (Warfield). There were 350 **Ruddy Turnstones** at Assateague on June 4 (M. O'Brien, Wierenga) and 1 at Ocean City on July 3 (Hilton).

*Calidridine Sandpipers, Dowitchers.* The high report for **Red Knots** was 75 in Ocean City on June 4, and 15 were there on June 20 (M. O'Brien, Brinker, Wierenga). Hart-Miller hosted 34 Red Knots on June 2 and 5 on June 9, with 12 **Sanderlings** there on June 2 (Dixon+). Other Sanderlings reported were 2,000 at Assateague on June 4 (M. O'Brien, Wierenga), 1 at Hart-Miller on June 9 (Dixon+), and 1 at North Branch on July 26 and 30 (Simons, Twigg). Once again the spring and fall migration of **Semipalmated Sandpipers** overlapped with 5,000 at Ocean City on June 4 (M. O'Brien, Wierenga), 1 at North Branch on June 12 (Paulus), 3 at Cambridge on June 12 (M. O'Brien), 1 at Hart-Miller on June 15 (Dixon+), and 2 at Ocean City on July 3 (M. O'Brien). **Western Sandpipers** reported were 4 at Remington on July 16 (Grubers), 2500 at Hart-Miller on July 21 (Dixon+), and 6 at Laytonsville on July 29 (Todd). There were 2 **Least Sandpipers** at North Branch on June 2 (Twigg), 20 at Hart-Miller on June 2 (Dixon+), 6 at North Branch on June 5 (Paulus), 10 at Easton on June 7 (Effinger, Russell, Olsen), 1 at North Branch on June 18 and 2 there on June 29 (Simons, Twigg), 2 at Loch Raven on June 29 (Simon), 9 at Ocean City on July 3 (M. O'Brien), 16 at North Branch on July 26 (Twigg), 148 at Hart-Miller on July 28 (Dixon+), and 40 at Easton on July 29 (Effinger). An estimated 4200 unidentified peeps were at Hart-Miller during the July 28 survey (Dixon+). Michael O'Brien noted 10 **White-rumped Sandpipers** at Ocean City on June 6, 4 were reported at Hart-Miller on June 9 (Dixon+), 4 at Ocean City on June 20 (M. O'Brien, Brinker, Wierenga), and 1 in breeding plumage in Ocean City on July 2-3 (O'Briens, Hilton, Wierenga). The Hart-Miller survey tallied 59 **Pectoral Sandpipers** on July 28, and Effinger counted 19 at Easton on July 29. A **Purple Sandpiper** was seen at Ocean City on July 3 (M. O'Brien, Wierenga). **Dunlins** reported were 3 during the Hart-Miller survey on June 9 and 2 in breeding plumage at Chincoteague Bay on June 20 (M. O'Brien, Brinker, Wierenga). A **Stilt Sandpiper** was at Cambridge on July 8 (M. O'Brien, Gough), 8 were at Hart-Miller on July 14 (Dixon+), and 4 at Easton on July 29 (Effinger). A **Ruff** was at Hart-Miller on July 14 and July 28 (Dixon+). **Short-billed Dowitcher** reports were of 150 birds at Ocean City on June 20 (M. O'Brien, Brinker,



Wierenga), 5 at North Branch on June 23 (Twigg, Simons), 30+ at Ocean City on July 3 (Hilton, P.O'Brien), 1 at North Branch on July 10 (Paulus, Simons), and 425 counted on the Hart-Miller survey of July 14 (Dixon+).

*Gulls.* Czaplak noted 3 **Laughing Gulls** in DC on July 14, and M. O'Brien noted some juveniles flying at Ocean City on July 17. Other Laughing Gulls reported were 1 at Wilde Lake on July 27 (Elise Seay) and 1550 at Hart-Miller on July 28 (Dixon+). A first-summer **Franklin's Gull** was seen at Sandy Point SP on June 17 (M. O'Brien) and June 19 (Bonham, Davidson). The Hart-Miller survey turned up a **Little Gull** from June 9 through July 28 (Dixon+). A first-summer **Bonaparte's Gull** was seen in Ocean City from June 4 into August (M. O'Brien, Wierenga +), and an adult was seen there on July 3 (Hilton). Czaplak reported 105 first- and second-summer **Ring-billed Gulls** in DC on June 1. Other Ring-bill reports were of 1 at Lake Kittamaquidi, Columbia on June 1 (Chestem), 1000 at Hart-Miller on June 9 (Dixon+), 1 at North Branch on June 23 (Simons), 2 at Loch Raven on July 6 and 34 on the 16th (Simon), 55 adults at Kent Narrows on July 9 (Reese), 230, including 8 juveniles, in DC on July 14 (Czaplak), and 2 at Cumberland on July 26 (Twigg). A first-summer **Herring Gull** was in DC on June 1 (Czaplak), 2500 Herring Gulls were at Hart-Miller on June 2 (Dixon+), and 1 was near Ellicott City on July 25 (Ott). Two first-summer plumaged **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were at Sandy Point SP on June 17-19 (M. O'Brien, Davidson). A first-summer **Glaucous Gull** was at Ocean City on June 20 and July 2-3 (M. O'Brien, Brinker, Wierenga) and another Glaucous was at Hart-Miller on July 21 (Dixon+). Czaplak reported 2 **Great Black-backed Gulls** in DC on June 1 and 9 there on July 14, and 370 were estimated at Hart-Miller on July 28 (Dixon+).

*Terns, Skimmers.* Non-breeding **Gull-billed Terns** reported were 4 at Hart-Miller on June 9 (Dixon, Hank Kaestner) and 1 at Easton on July 19 (Effinger). The June 15 Hart-Miller survey recorded 150 **Caspian Terns** (Dixon+). Other reports were of 1 Caspian at Violette's Lock on June 25 (P.O'Brien), 1 adult at Ocean City on July 3 (M. O'Brien, Wierenga), 7 at Kent Narrows on July 9 (Reese), 7 in DC on July 14 (Czaplak), 1 at Wilde Lake on July 16 (Chestem), and 264 at Hart-Miller on July 28 (Dixon). There were 100 **Royal Terns** at Ocean City on July 3 (O'Briens, Hilton, Wierenga), 8 at Worton Point, Kent County on July 26 (Grubers), 1 at Annapolis on July 27 (Iliff) and 1 at Hart-Miller on July 28 (Dixon). One to two first-summer **Sandwich Terns** were seen periodically in Ocean City from June 4 through July 3 along with from 1-2 adults first seen on June 20 and last reported on July 16 (O'Briens, Brinker, Hilton, Wierenga). An adult was also seen at Assateague on July 17 (M. O'Brien, Wierenga). M. O'Brien noted juvenile **Common Terns** flying at Ocean City on July 2, and 12 chicks were seen with the 202 Common Terns counted at Hart-Miller on July 21 (Dixon+); 7 birds were seen at Chestertown on July 17 (Grubers). A first summer **Arctic Tern** was reported in Ocean City on July 2 and a **Roseate Tern** was spotted there on June 18 (M. O'Brien). **Forster's Terns** of note were 170 at Hart-Miller on June 15 (Dixon+), an adult at Seneca on July 4 (Czaplak), 285 flying by Sandy Point SP on July 8 (M. O'Brien, Gough), 71 in DC on July 28 (Czaplak), 3 adults at North Branch on July 29 (Paulus), and 16 at Hog Island Marsh, Caroline County on July 30 (Engle). Reese found **Least Terns** nesting on roofs in Easton and Cambridge, and 2 were seen at Harford Glen, Harford County on July 13 after a thunderstorm (Swift). **Black Terns** found during the Hart-Miller surveys were 3 on June 2 and 7 on June 15 (Dixon+); other reports were of 1 adult in Ocean City on June 4 (M. O'Brien, Wierenga) and 2 at the DC hydrilla on July 28 (Hilton). Over 250 **Black**



**Skimmers** were reported in Ocean City on July 16 (M. O'Brien, Wierenga).

*Cuckoos, Owls, Goatsuckers, Chimney Swifts.* A migrant **Black-billed Cuckoo** was seen in Waldorf on June 2 (Jett), and another was heard flying over Hooper Island at night on June 14 along with 6 **Yellow-billed Cuckoos** (M. O'Brien). Chestem reported an adult **Eastern Screech-Owl** with young from June 14-17 at Wilde Lake, and Czaplak saw a large fledgling **Great Horned Owl** at Black Hill Park on June 2. A **Common Nighthawk** was at Assateague on June 3 (M. O'Brien, Wierenga), a **Chuck-will's-widow** was noted throughout the summer at Soldiers Delight, Baltimore County (Walbeck, Pete Webb), and 150 **Chimney Swifts** were seen at Easton on July 29 (Reese).

*Woodpeckers, Flycatchers, Swallows.* Harry Armistead reported a **Pileated Woodpecker** at Bellevue, an unusual locale for this species, on July 28. An **Olive-sided Flycatcher** reported at Little Bennett Park, Montgomery County on June 10, ties the latest spring record for this species (Naomi Ulmek). A pair of **Acadian Flycatchers** with 3 young was found at Town Point, Cecil County on July 17 (Reese). In Garrett County 2 **Alder Flycatchers** were seen at Wolf Swamp on June 2 (M. O'Brien), two others near Negro Mountain on July 14 (M. O'Brien, Hilton), and 1 at Cranesville Swamp on July 14 (M. O'Brien, Hilton). **Willow Flycatchers** of note were 7 singing birds with at least four young at Centennial on July 26 (Solem, Ott) and a pair of **Least Flycatchers** was found nesting in Garrett County near the intersection of Chestnut Grove Road and Route 135 on June 7-8 (Bjerke). An **Eastern Phoebe** was seen at Smithville near Hooper Island on June 1 (H. Armistead). Mike O'Brien spotted 2 **Tree Swallows** at Antietam Battlefield on June 8, there was 1 at Centennial on July 9 (Farrell), 600 at Joppatowne on July 15 (Swift), 200 at Chestertown on July 16 (Grubers), 600 at Black Hill Park on July 19 (Czaplak), and 700 at Damsite on July 28 (Grubers). The high for **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** was 150 at Violette's Lock on July 19 (M. O'Brien). About 75 **Bank Swallows** were at Easton on July 10 (Effinger), 500 at Damsite on July 26-28, and 400 at Ruthsburg on July 27 (Grubers). Approximately 150, mostly Banks with some Rough-winged, were along the Sassafras River near Cecilton on June 25 (Ricciardi). Jim Stasz estimated 100 **Cliff Swallows** at Pretty Boy Dam, Baltimore County on June 2, and 2 were at Sandy Point SP on July 8 along with 150 **Barn Swallows** (M. O'Brien, Gough).

*Nuthatches, Creepers, Wrens, Kinglets.* A **Red-breasted Nuthatch** was at New Germany SP, Garrett County on June 8 (Walbeck+), and an adult **White-breasted Nuthatch** with 4 young was seen near Ellicott City on June 2 (Ott). Bjerke reported a pair of **Brown Creepers** at a nest on June 7 near Maple Glen Road in Garrett County, and Reese found a **House Wren** nest with 5 eggs on June 29 in Taneytown. Miller noted a singing **Marsh Wren** at Lilypons on June 29. Michael O'Brien counted 10 **Golden-crowned Kinglets** at Keyzers Ridge on June 2 and Ringler saw 1 singing at the Hanover Watershed on June 15.

*Thrushes, Waxwings, Shrikes, Starlings, Vireos.* Stasz reported a **Veery** along the Gunpowder River at Blue Mount on June 2 and Czaplak counted 33 at Swallow Falls SP on June 8. Single **Swainson's Thrushes** were heard flying over Rockville the night of June 3, over Ocean City on June 6, and over Somerset County on June 7 (M. O'Brien). Reese found late nesting **American Robins** with 1 incubating 3 eggs at Elk Mills on June 27 and another with 3 eggs at Taneytown on June 29. Czaplak reported 3 adult **Cedar Waxwings** building a nest at Black Hill Park on June 16, and Nuttle observed an adult

still feeding young in Denton on July 31. Single **Loggerhead Shrikes** were at West Frederick on June 16 (D. Smith) and near Queen Anne on July 15-16 (Grubers). Ringler noted a flock of about 100 young **European Starlings** at Piney Run on June 13. A **White-eyed Vireo** was spotted feeding 2 young just out of the nest at Elk Mills on June 27 (Reese).

*Warblers.* Pauline Calder reported a **Brewster's Warbler** at a farm near Route 560 in Garrett County on June 29, and M. O'Brien saw a **Yellow Warbler** heading south over Ocean City on July 17. Ringler watched a **Prairie Warbler** at Liberty Watershed, Carroll County on June 3, singing a nearly perfect Field Sparrow song. Harry Armistead reported a female migrant **Black-and-white Warbler** at Bellevue on July 28, and Reese noted a **Worm-eating Warbler** at Easton on June 20. A **Mourning Warbler** was singing at Swallow Falls SP on July 14 (M. O'Brien, Hilton), and an adult **Canada Warbler** with food for young was there on June 8 (Czaplak). **American Redstart** reports of note were 1 at Tanyard on June 11 (Engle), a male singing near Shadyside on June 17 (Ricciardi), an immature near Ellicott City on July 28 (Ott) and an immature at Triadelphia on July 28 (Farrell, Solem).

*Tanagers, Cardinals, Grosbeaks, Dickcissels.* A **Summer Tanager** was at Elk Mills on June 27 and 1 was at Town Point on July 17 (Reese). Czaplak spotted an adult **Northern Cardinal** feeding a cowbird fledgling at Black Hill Park on June 16, and Walbeck reported a female **Blue Grosbeak** at a nest with 2 eggs at Parole on July 9. **Dickcissel** reports were of 4 males in the fields near Buckeystown on June 2 (Czaplak), 5 near Massey on June 8 (Effinger, Russell, Olsen), 1 at Hope on June 11 (Grubers), and 1 at Queen Anne on June 30 and July 31 (Rittenhouse).

*Sparrows.* Skipper reported many **Chipping Sparrows** near Oakland with 1 carrying nesting material on July 3. Single **Vesper Sparrows** were seen at Lilypons on June 8 (Hilton) and at Denton on July 31 (Reese). Three **Henslow's Sparrows** were heard on Combination Road, Garrett County on June 13 (Skipper), 1 was near Westernport on July 13 (M. O'Brien), and 8 were singing near Negro Mountain, Garrett County on July 14 (M. O'Brien, Hilton). The highest count for **Sharp-tailed Sparrows** was 119 at Elliott Island on June 13 (Armisteads, Mills). Reese reported a total of 4 male **Seaside Sparrows** singing at two different locations at Kent Narrows on July 9, and Iliff heard a **Swamp Sparrow** singing at Sandy Point SP on June 8. A late **Dark-eyed Junco** was seen at Hampstead on June 1 (Dave and Michel Hudgins).

*Icterines, Cardueline Finches.* Ringler reported 2 singing male **Bobolinks** at different locations near Keysville on June 1, with 3 males and a female at one of these locations and 1 male at the other on June 9 and 4 males the same day at yet another spot in the same vicinity; only 1 male was seen in the area on June 16 after some fields had been mowed. Other Bobolink reports included 4 birds at Oland Road on July 6 (Miller), 6 at Drawbridge on July 9 (M. O'Brien, Wierenga), 88 at Choptank Wetlands Preserve, Talbot County on July 9 (M. O'Brien), 3 still defending a nest near Westernport on July 13 (M. O'Brien), and a flock feeding at Lilypons on July 23 (Miller). Twigg reported a flock of over 1000 **Red-winged Blackbirds** and **Common Grackles** migrating over Fort Hill Stadium, Cumberland on July 27. Mike O'Brien noted 6 **Boat-tailed Grackles** at Tilghman Island on June 14, and Effinger saw 3 females there on June 23. A pair of **Orchard Orioles** was feeding young in a nest at Black Hill Park on June 16 (Czaplak).

Rambo spotted a **Northern Oriole** at Wye Island WMA on June 13. Hilton heard a male **Purple Finch** singing at Swallow Falls SP on July 14, and Betty Wise reported 2 albino **House Finches** at Denton on June 23. Skipper reported 6 **Pine Siskins** at her feeder at Bray Hill, Garrett County on June 9 and 1 on July 2.

9763 Early Spring Way, Columbia, Md. 21046

## A LEUCISTIC HOUSE FINCH AT THE FEEDER

RANDY B. CROOK

My husband and I have been observing birds at our feeding stations and elsewhere in our backyard since we moved to Catonsville, Md. five and a half years ago. We have witnessed many interesting occurrences among our bird life but none so challenging as a visitor to our feeders on December 29, 1990 and January 7, 1991. This bird frequented our feeders on the only two days of that winter that it snowed. It always went to the same perch on the same tube feeder (we have three) or sat in the maple tree, which holds the feeders, off and on all day on both occasions. It fed on black oil sunflower seeds with the large flock of House Finches (*Carpodacus mexicanus*) that feeds in our yard.

Our unusual visitor was black and white with a little tan wash. It was about the same size as the House Finches and had a finch bill, body shape and posture. We immediately thought "Snow Bunting!", but on closer inspection we realized that the placement of the colors was wrong. The eyes and beak were both black. The legs were flesh colored. It had a white head and back but there was also some light tan streaking on the back. It had a black "V" toward the rump. There were dark-brown to black streaks around the neck and on the epaulets. The wings were largely white with black down the outer edge. The tail was unevenly black on the outer tail feathers (left and right sides of the tail did not match) and white in the center. The asymmetry of the tail plumage led us to believe that our bird was partially albinistic (or probably more correctly leucistic).

We combed all of our field guides and other ornithological reference books and found nothing of any help. We contacted friends, took pictures and did other research but could not come up with a sure answer. Finally, in late August, 1991 we contacted Roger Clapp at the National Museum of Natural History. Three days after mailing my letter to him, Mr. Clapp called and identified our bird was a leucistic House Finch.

End of story, right? Wrong; there are a few interesting postscripts. Mr. Clapp had seen (as we and several of Mr. Clapp's associates have concluded from comparing photos taken at both locations) this same bird at his feeder in Aldie, Virginia, on November 9 and 10, 1990. We have found it to be an interesting twist

of fate that I should have happened to contact Mr. Clapp specifically and that he had observed the very bird in question himself. We wonder if the northern movement of this bird can be taken as evidence of migration.

Additionally, once it was established that this bird was indeed albinistic/leucistic, I wanted to find out more about this condition in birds and House Finches specifically. I found very few current articles on albinism in locally available resources and was unable to find any articles referencing House Finches. Three articles I obtained describe House Finches with varying degrees of white and otherwise normal plumage. Our bird had no normal coloration. Now I am wondering if our black and white finch is evidence of a new type of mutation. It has been suggested that the darker plumage only appeared black next to the contrasting white. I have re-examined our pictures and found that the features are still much darker than those of the other House Finches that were at the feeder at the same time.

I thank Roger Clapp for his invaluable help, observations, research assistance, photocopies, and encouragement.

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## FIRST SUGARLOAF MOUNTAIN CHRISTMAS COUNT

KEITH VAN NESS

The first Sugarloaf Mountain Christmas Bird Count was held on December 29, 1984. The count was organized late, and the results did not appear in the National Audubon Society's annual *American Birds* Christmas Count issue for that year. This is the first publication of the results of the 1984 count, and brings the history of the count up to date. All subsequent counts have been published in *American Birds*.

The circle of 7.5 mile radius is centered 1.5 miles north-northeast of Thurston and includes Lilypons, Little Bennett Park and parts of the Monocacy and Potomac rivers; elevation 200 to 1282 ft.

It was an ideal spring day. The high temperature was about 74° and the low about 50°F. There was almost no cloud cover, and a gentle warm wind blew out of the southwest. We'll probably never see this kind of weather for a count again.

We had an almost complete lack of ducks. We believe this was because we scheduled the count during a waterfowl hunting day and because the warm weather brought out an unusually high number of hunters along the Potomac River. We hope to schedule the count on Sunday in the future. The unseasonably warm weather also reduced the number of winter birds. No Short-eared Owls, Rough-legged Hawks, redpolls, Snow Buntings, or longspurs. We did not even get the Snowy Owl that was spotted in Frederick on December 19th! Wild food and water conditions were excellent. There was even a good number of insects and grubs for the insectivores. Good documentation was submitted for all boldfaced birds.

Thirty-nine observers in 19 parties. Total party-hours, 90.5 (64 on foot, 25 by car, 1.5 owling); total party-miles, 296 (52 on foot, 238 by car, 6 owling).

Great Blue Heron 18; Tundra Swan 5; Canada Goose 177; American Black Duck 99; Mallard 433; Gadwall 3; Black Vulture 33; Turkey Vulture 130; Northern Harrier 13; Sharp-shinned Hawk 3; Red-shouldered Hawk 17; Red-tailed Hawk 41; American Kestrel 23; Ring-necked Pheasant 2; Northern Bobwhite 44; Killdeer 23; **Lesser Yellowlegs** 1 (R. Carter); Common Snipe 6; Ring-billed Gull 312; Herring Gull 1; Rock Dove 384; Mourning Dove 247; Barn Owl 1; Eastern Screech-Owl 3; Barred Owl 6; **Saw-whet Owl** 1 (R. Carter); Belted Kingfisher 16; Red-headed Woodpecker 5; Red-bellied Woodpecker 102; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 12; Downy Woodpecker 117; Hairy Woodpecker 11; Northern Flicker 88; Pileated Woodpecker 35; Eastern Phoebe 1; Horned Lark 239; Blue Jay 104; American Crow 1221; Fish Crow 52; crow sp. 644; Carolina Chickadee 251; Tufted Titmouse 143; White-breasted Nuthatch 56; Brown Creeper 21; Carolina Wren 87; Winter Wren 5; Golden-crowned Kinglet 59; Ruby-crowned Kinglet 23; **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** 1 (E DeMoll); Eastern Bluebird 91; Hermit Thrush 3; Northern Mockingbird 114; Cedar Waxwing 63; Loggerhead Shrike 1; European Starling 2965; Yellow-rumped Warbler 61; Northern Cardinal 301; Rufous-sided Towhee 7; American Tree Sparrow 1; Field Sparrow 49; Savannah Sparrow 26; Song Sparrow 146; Swamp Sparrow 25; White-throated Sparrow 716; White-crowned Sparrow 156; Dark-eyed Junco 651; Red-winged Blackbird 191; Eastern Meadowlark 121; Common Grackle 25; Brown-headed Cowbird 91; Purple Finch 2; House Finch 75; American Goldfinch 141; House Sparrow 441.

Total: 73 species; 11,785 individuals.

Participants: Donna Adler, Joy Aso, Mike Bowen, Robin Carter, Kathy Dale, Edward DeMoll, Stan Fisher, Patrick Flaherty, Rob Gibbs, Jack Goodman, Bob Hahn, Margaret Hawk, Tony Heatwole, John Hench, Cindy Hilmoe, Paul Jung, Helen Kavanagh, Anthony Lapham, Nicholas Lapham, John Malcolm, Donna Matson, Roger Matson, Mieke Mehlman, Anne Mitchell, Pat Moore, LeRoy Morgan, Charles Mullican, Gary Nelson, Carol Pickett, Linda Smith, Mark Swick, Holly Van Ness, Keith Van Ness (**compiler**), Dave Wallace, Mike Welch, Bill Wendell, Don Whitman, Walt Williams, Erika Wilson.

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### Apologies

The latter half of Joy Wheeler's book review of Spring in Washington was inadvertently omitted by the printer from page 70 of the June 1991 issue. The entire review will appear in the March 1992 issue.

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### CONTENTS, DECEMBER 1991

First Record of Northern Wheatear in Maryland .....	<i>Michael O'Brien</i> .....	131
First Record of Black-legged Kittiwake in Baltimore County .....	<i>Eirik Blom and Robert Ringler</i> .....	134
An Instance of House Sparrow Aggression .....	<i>Haven Kolb</i> .....	135
Breeding Season, June 1 - July 31, 1991 .....	<i>Daniel &amp; Linda Southworth</i> .....	137
A Leucistic House Finch at the Feeder .....	<i>Randy B. Crook</i> .....	145
First Sugarloaf Mountain Christmas Count .....	<i>Keith Van Ness</i> .....	146

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